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ABSTRACT

Project ALERT was developed as an education for employment component of the Summer Youth Employment Program for the summer of 1983, and represents an effort designed to address several critical needs emanating from the high unemployment rate among economically disadvantaged young persons. Each of 200 participants spent two and one-half days per week engaged in education and career-planning activities, and two and one-half days per week engaged in work experience activities designed and implemented by the Atlanta Public School System in conjunction with the Atlanta Comprehensive Employment and Training Act (CETA) office. Students received instruction in the areas of communications, computations, and career planning; and were placed for 20 hours of work experience on public and nonprofit work sites located throughout the Atlanta community. All students successfully completing program requirements received 10 hours of academic credit. The 187 participants completing the program improved their scores on posttests of computation and communication. Career area posttest scores failed to improve, although more than 50 percent of the participants mastered each of the career objectives. Improvements in work-site supervisor ratings indicate that the project served to have a positive impact on pertinent work behaviors. (PN)

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EVALUATION OF PROJECT ALERT
(ATLANTANS LEARNING EMPLOYMENT RESPONSIBILITIES TOGETHER)
SUMMER YOUTH EMPLOYMENT PROGRAM

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RESEARCH, EVALUATION, AND DATA PROCESSING
ATLANTA PUBLIC SCHOOLS
ATLANTA, GEORGIA

Report No. 17-10, 9/83

EVALUATION OF PROJECT ALERT
(ATLANTANS LEARNING EMPLOYMENT RESPONSIBILITIES TOGETHER)
SUMMER YOUTH EMPLOYMENT PROGRAM

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EVALUATION OF PROJECT ALERT
(ATLANTANS LEARNING EMPLOYMENT RESPONSIBILITIES TOGETHER)
SUMMER YOUTH EMPLOYMENT PROGRAM
1983

INTRODUCTION

Project ALERT was developed as an education for employment component of the Summer Youth Employment Program (SYEP) for the Summer of 1983 and represents an effort designed to address several critical needs emanating from the high unemployment rate among economically disadvantaged young persons. Though currently under revision, the primary purpose of youth employment programs is to lower the high rate of teenage unemployment while creating meaningful employment opportunities. Youth unemployment rates have continued to rise for the past five years. Nationally, the unemployment rate for 16- to 19-year-olds is approximately 25 percent, while locally it is approaching 50 percent. Though the economic forecasters are expounding an end to the current recession, evidence prevails concerning the high continuing rate of unemployment for minority youth.

PROJECT DESCRIPTION

Project ALERT was designed and implemented by the Atlanta Public School System in conjunction with the Atlanta Comprehensive Employment and Training Act (CETA) office. The program was designed to provide services for 200 youths between the ages of 14 and 16 and extended from June 20, 1983, to August 19, 1983.

Participants in this project were CETA-eligible applicants having a normal curve equivalent (NCE) total battery score on the California Achievement Tests (CAT) of 49 percent or less who were selected and referred through the SYEP referral process. All participants were economically disadvantaged residents of the City of Atlanta. Each participant had been enrolled in the Atlanta Public School System during the 1982-83 academic year and had taken the CAT. All participants were rising ninth or tenth graders and expressed a willingness to participate in the education for employment aspect of the 1983 SYEP.

Each participant spent two and one-half days per week engaged in education and career-planning activities, and two and one-half days per week engaged in work-experience activities. For the two and one-half days in which participants were engaged in educational pursuits, two five and one-half-hour days were spent with students receiving instruction in the areas of communications, computations, and career planning; and for one-half day (3 hours) students were involved in career-oriented activities solely. Participants were placed for 20 hours of work experience on public and nonprofit work sites located throughout the Atlanta community. All students were paid at the rate of $3.35 per hour for 34 hours of participation per week. All students successfully completing program requirements received ten hours of academic credit.

Program Objectives

The primary goal of this project was to increase the future employability potential of the participants by increasing their reading and mathematics competencies, helping them to clarify their career goals, and providing them with employment experiences. Specific objectives are listed below.

1. To increase the communication and competency level of 200 youths by providing focused and intensive instruction in functional reading and language skills.

2. To increase the numerical competency levels of 200 youths by providing focused and intensive instruction in mathematical operations and problem solving.

3. To increase 200 youths' understanding of the relationship between education and the world of work.

4. To assist 200 youths in clarifying their career goals through career-planning activities.

5. To increase 200 youths' awareness of the job families through career planning activities.

6. To increase 200 youths' understanding of their obligations as employees by requiring punctuality and attendance at a minimum of 90 percent of all planned program activities.

7. To increase the job-finding skills of 200 participants through career-planning course work.

8. To increase the job retention skills of 200 participants through career-planning course work.

Performance Standards

1. A minimum of 90 percent of the participants will meet attendance requirements.

2. The drop-out rate will not exceed 10 percent of total terminations.

3. All funded slots for youth workers will be filled by June 3, 1983.

4. All slot vacancies will be filled within three working days of receipt of termination notification.

5. A minimum of 90 percent of the participants in the project will receive academic credit.

Anticipated Outcomes

1. A minimum of 75 percent of the program participants will demonstrate improved academic performance by showing favorable growth in basic skill competencies as a result of their participation in Project ALERT. The Criterion-Referenced pretest and posttest developed by the Atlanta Public Schools' Research Division will be used to measure changes in the competency levels (numerical and communicative).

2. A minimum of 75 percent of the participants will demonstrate mastery of 80 percent of the career objectives.

The program officially began on June 16, 1983. The first two days of the program were devoted exclusively to staff orientation and preplanning activities. The staff selected the curriculum objectives and the program materials, and they established operational procedures for the program. In addition, staff members utilized CAT data for gross grouping in order to assign students to their instructional clusters. Students were assigned to attendance groups based upon their home school (no school had more than 20 students in an attendance group). June 20, 1983, was a starting date for those students assigned to Group 1 as well as students assigned to Group 2. Students in both groups were given an orientation to the program as well as an introductory session. This orientation took place during the first hour and a half of attendance on each group's initial day of school participation. On the first day of attendance at the learning site, students in each group were administered the pretest by the instructional personnel and were informed of their instructional clusters. Instructional undertakings, though all focused on the same objectives, were tailored to meet the student's academic abilities.

Students in attendance Group 1 began the program at the educational site, while those in group 2 began at the employment sites. Students in Group 1 attended classes on Monday, Tuesday, and Friday; and students in Group 2 attended classes on Wednesday, Thursday, and Friday.

All students were involved in the Friday afternoon Career Jamborees (see Appendix B). These motivational activities involved local professionals who spoke to participants in order to raise their levels of aspiration. Further, participants were involved in special group dynamic and substance awareness programs as well as field trips.

The instructional personnel served to address student needs related to and occurring within the educational setting. Work-site and job-site difficulties were handled by the counseling team. Further, the counseling team served as the link between the educational sites and work sites. Efforts were expended to immediately resolve student problems while insuring that communications were maintained with all parties. This approach served to maintain a positive relationship between all parties (i.e., participants, staff members, and work-site supervisors) throughout the program.

FINDINGS

Data Analysis

The data that were gathered on the Project ALERT participants were analyzed in order to yield information regarding changes in participant attitudes as well as competence levels. Variances between participants' pretest and posttest performances were examined through examination of group means. This statistical procedure was selected to yield answers to the following questions.

1. Did Project ALERT significantly impact participants?
   a. To what degree did communication skills improve?
   b. To what degree did mathematics skills improve?
   c. To what degree did career knowledge improve?
2. Did the participants' understanding of the relationship between education/training and the world of work improve as a result of Project ALERT?
3. Did the site supervisor's ratings of the participants change during the course of the project?
4. What were the strengths and weaknesses of Project ALERT as perceived by staff members?

Secondly, the data were examined to determine whether the performance standards (see preceding section) were met successfully. Finally, findings were reviewed to assess whether anticipated outcomes were attained.

Results

A comparison of the pretest-posttest gains exhibited by the program participants was made for the three instructional areas of programmatic focus. A correlated t test was utilized to analyze the gains shown in the areas of communications, computations, and career development.

TABLE 1

PRETEST-POSTTEST COMPARISON OF PARTICIPANTS' GAIN IN COMMUNICATION (N = 181)

Category	Mean	Standard Deviation
Pretest	16.54	.37
Posttest	17.21	.34

p = .05

The communications subtest stressed those reading and language arts skills assessed on the Georgia Basic Skills Tests (GBST). As shown in Table 1, the participants attained a mean posttest score .67 points greater than their pretest score. Such a difference, though small, indicates the majority of participants gained additional communication knowledge. Further, the probability score ($p = .05$) indicates that the mean posttest score is not due to chance.

Data attained through the comparison of the computation subtest scores reveal that the participants demonstrated a 2.11-point improvement in their mean score between the pretest and posttest. (See Table 2.)

TABLE 2

PRETEST-POSTTEST COMPARISON OF PARTICIPANTS' GAIN IN COMPUTATION (N = 181)

Category	Mean	Standard Deviation
Pretest	10.27	.26
Posttest	12.38	.32

$p = .014$

A change of this magnitude is the result of chance in only 1.4 out of 100 instances ($p = .014$). Therefore, the gain attained between the pretest and posttest indicates a true change in students' performance following their participation in Project ALERT. Further, the gain in computation represents the greatest gain of the three areas of instruction.

Examination of the pretest-posttest results indicate a lack of improvement in the participants' career knowledge. (See Table 3.) There was a 4.69-point loss exhibited between their pretest and posttest mean scores. This loss, though the greatest evidenced change between the pretest and posttest scores, is likely the result of chance ($p = .10$) rather than due to a true change in career knowledge.

TABLE 3

PRETEST-POSTTEST COMPARISON OF
PARTICIPANTS' GAIN IN
CAREER KNOWLEDGE
(N = 181)

Category	Mean	Standard Deviation
Pretest	130.79	7.50
Posttest	126.10	78.66

p = .10

Though Table 3 reveals a loss in the area of career knowledge, Table 4 shows a 1 percent gain in participants' understanding of the relationship of education/training to the world of work.

TABLE 4

CHANGE IN UNDERSTANDING OF RELATIONSHIP
BETWEEN EDUCATION/TRAINING
AND CAREER GOALS

Category	Percent of Participants Demonstrating Mastery	Percent Change
Pretest	85	+1
Posttest	86	

Data on a randomly matched sample of participants was examined to identify any changes in the supervisor's ratings. As revealed in Table 5, the data yielded through the supervisors' questionnaire show the participants' posttest rating improving by .40 points. Though small, the difference exhibited shows a slight improvement in ratings following participation in Project ALERT.

TABLE 5

SUPERVISORS' BEGINNING AND ENDING
PARTICIPANT RATINGS
(N = 70)

Project Period	Mean	Standard Deviation
Beginning	21.85	11.50
End	22.25	12.09

Project ALERT's major strengths were in promotion and use of team teaching as its instructional mode, the strong counseling support provided, and the total involvement of staff in implementing the program. These strengths resulted in a feeling of unity that prompted untiring staff efforts.

The major weaknesses of the program was the lack of adequate planning time, the lack of adherence to discipline guidelines detailed in the student handbook, and the inclusion of students with emotional and/or behavioral handicaps in the program. It was stated by instructional staff that future education for employment programs should allow for greater weekly staff planning time, and close adherence to delineated discipline procedures. Further, since students with behavioral and/or emotional handicaps are to be part of the program that adequate personnel skilled in working with such students should be secured.

The instructional staff stated that Project ALERT's major impact was the tying together of education and employment. They indicated that the opportunity to earn and learn enabled participants to concretize the relationship between education/training and work.

Records maintained by the Project ALERT instructional staff show that the attendance requirement was achieved and exceeded by program participants. As can be seen in Table 6, the attendance rate was 3.65 points greater than the 90 percent criterion established as performance standard one.

TABLE 6

AVERAGE PARTICIPANT ATTENDANCE

Number of Weeks	Percent Attendance Rate	Percent Relation to Standard
9	93.65	+3.65

One hundred eighty-seven of the original 201 enrollees completed the program. Fourteen participants were terminated for various reasons. (See Appendix B.) Four of the fourteen terminations were due to lack of interest and were, therefore, classified as dropouts. These four dropouts represent 28.5 percent of the terminations and indicate that performance standard two was not met. (See Table 7.)

TABLE 7

ASSESSMENT OF PARTICIPANTS DROPPING OUT

Project Period	Number of Enrollees	Difference	Percent Terminated	Percent Terminations Dropping Out
Beginning	201	-14	6.96	28.5
End	187			

Performance standard three was met prior to June 3, 1983, with the identification of participant number 201. The first slot vacancy occurred during the second week of the program. Though termination papers were completed for each terminee, no referrals were received nor vacancies filled. This decision was made administratively so that no participants would be added after the first ten days of project operations, because of the amount of instructional time they would have missed. Performance standard four, therefore, was not achieved.

One hundred eighty-six of the participants completing Project ALERT earned passing grades. One of the participants received a failing grade in English, and though his/her transcript will reflect enrollment in two curriculum areas during the summer of 1983, he/she will receive academic credit in only one. Table 8 shows that 99.5 percent of the participants completing the program received academic credit for their involvement in Project ALERT, thereby exceeding performance standard five.

TABLE 8

PARTICIPANTS RECEIVING ACADEMIC CREDIT

Number of Enrollees Completing Program	Number of Enrollees Receiving Academic Credit	Percentage
187	186*	99.5

*One participant received a failing grade in English and, therefore, only five hours of credit rather than ten.

TABLE 9

MASTERY OF CAREER OBJECTIVES

Objective	Percent of Participants Demonstrating Mastery
Recognizes that one is influenced in some way by every subject, knows how school works	63
Recognizes that career goals are achieved through experience and/or additional training	86
Recognizes how personal characteristics may help/hinder work on the job.	66
Recognizes how the decisions a person makes now will have an effect on reaching long-range goals.	56
Recognizes how the ability to get along with people affects getting, keeping, and advancing in a job.	56

As can be seen in Table 9, 56 percent or more of the participants mastered each of the career objectives. The greatest number of participants mastered career objective 10, while the fewest participants demonstrated mastery of career objectives 12 and 13. Fewer than the anticipated 75 percent of the participants mastered 80 percent of the career objectives.

SUMMARY AND CONCLUSIONS

Project ALERT served as a positive learning experience for all of the 187 participants completing the program. Participants in the project exhibited the acquisition of additional knowledge, as indicated by the positive improvement evidenced by their posttest scores in computation and communications. Though their career area posttest scores failed to improve, more than 50 percent of the participants mastered each of the assessed five career objectives. Improvements in work-site supervisor ratings indicate that the project served to have a positive impact on pertinent work behaviors. Three of the five performance standards were met and exceeded:

1. An attendance rate of 93.65 percent was achieved.

2. All funded youth worker slots were filled by June 3, 1983.

3. Ninety-nine and five-tenths percent of the participants received ten hours of academic credit.

Further, instructional staff members and counselors expressed the belief that the majority of the participants showed changes in academic as well as job attitudes during the course of their involvement with the Project.

Based upon the findings shown above, it is concluded that an education-for-employment program provides a viable experience for participants. Further, the data suggests that the age span for education-for-employment participants should be no more than two years. In order to serve those students who could benefit most from an education-for-employment program, participation should be restricted to those students demonstrating below-average academic achievement. Such steps will permit the program to be focused on those students having similar needs, and will heighten the programmatic impact on those students likely to experience the greatest difficulties in achieving postsecondary employment.

APPENDICES

APPENDIX A

APPENDIX A

PROJECT ALERT
PARTICIPANT - STAFF DATA

Participant Enrollment

	Beginning Enrollment	Terminations	Ending Enrollment
Attendance Group 1	102	4	98
Attendance Group 2	99	10	89
Totals	201	14	187

Staffing

Project Coordinator	1
Senior Typist	1 (In-Kind)
Senior Clerk	1
Job Developers/Counselors	2
Counselor	1
English Instructors	2
Mathematics Instructors	2
Career Planning Instructors	2
Total	12

Participant-Staff Ratio	Beginning	Ending
	17:1	16:1

PROJECT ALERT STAFF LISTING

Alan R. Koth	Project Coordinator
Mary C. Askew	Senior Typist (In-Kind)
Courtney Whitaker	Senior Clerk
Shirley J. Smith	Job Developer/Counselor
Parris J. Phillips	Job Developer/Counselor
Joyce P. Scott	Counselor
Jimmye C. Vaughn	Team Leader - English
Sandra K. Tennyson	Instructor - English
Glenn M. Randall	Team Leader - Mathematics
Doris C. Waters	Instructor - Mathematics
Margaret W. Askew	Team Leader - Career Development
Yvonne D. Head	Instructor - Career Development

APPENDIX B

Career Jamboree Agenda

Date	Theme or Activity
June 24	"Self Awareness"
July 1	"What's My line?" "From Your Point of View"
July 8	Labor Market Information Georgia State University Workshop
July 15	"Careers in Government"
July 22	Field Trip-Hartsfield International Airport-Job Identity Exercise
July 29	"Be Your Own Boss"
August 5	"Drug Awareness Program"-Group 1 Field Trip-Fernbank Science Center-Group 2
August 12	"Drug Awareness Program"-Group 2 Field Trip-Fernbank Science Center-Group 1

APPENDIX C

APPENDIX C

TERMINATIONS BY REASON

Date	Code	Reason
6/28/83	51	Refused to continue
7/5/83	34	Moved from the area
7/8/83	42	Determined ineligible
7/15/83	54	Administrative separation
7/21/83	54	Administrative separation
7/27/83	54	Administrative separation
7/27/83	54	Administrative separation
7/28/83	54	Administrative separation
8/1/83	54	Administrative separation
8/1/83	54	Administrative separation
8/2/83	51	Refused to continue
8/2/83	51	Refused to continue
8/2/83	54	Administrative separation
8/3/83	51	Refused to continue

APPENDIX D

APPENDIX D

Project ALERT

Percentage of School Attendance by Weeks

Week of	Group 1	Group 2	Composite
June 20th	95.75	97.64	96.68
June 27th	95.10	93.60	94.82
July 5th	90.2	91.47	90.84
July 11th	96.55	94.5	95.53
July 18th	89.77	94.1	91.94
July 25th	95.71	92.17	93.94
August 1st	89.93	91.85	90.89
August 8th	92.83	94.75	93.79
August 15th	91.50	97.37	94.44
Average Weekly Attendance	93.04	94.16	93.65

APPENDIX E

APPENDIX E

Selected Responses by Project Alert Students

"What Project Alert Meant to Me"

1. Project Alert has Meant a lot to me this summer. It has been a very interesting and rewarding experience. The worksite that I was assigned was exactly what I wanted and it has possibly opened new doors for another career choice. My worksite was WCLK Radio Station a jazz station located on the campus of Clark College. I will probably be working there year round. Project Alert has also helped me financially. It has helped get things for my pleasure and necessities. Also school has helped me as far as preparations for the BST test. I have enjoyed working with some of the teachers and being under their supervision. That's what Project Alert has meant to me.

Rodney Blackmon

2. It has been a learning experience for some of the things I don't know or I'm weak in. It has also been a place where I met new people. I had the chance to earn while you learn and work a full eight hours a day and see how your parents feel after a hard day at work. I hope I get another chance to work with Project Alert or whatever it may be next summer. So I say thank you Project Alert and it's staff.

Jennifer Butler

3. Project Alert has helped me in so many ways. For instance, it has helped me decide what kind of career field I wanted to go in. They have taught me, don't just go to learn something different. They taught me how and where to look for a job. For the most part I met some more friends. Project Alert to me is a learning experience. Project Alert is a memorable experience.

Cecelia L. Brown

4. Project Alert has meant money to me. This program has given me the opportunity to get a job and to make money. It has meant meeting new people. It has meant having more responsibility. I enjoyed myself and had fun. Project Alert has meant having work experience at the airport. Project Alert has meant to me an unforgettable experience.

Phebe Ward

5. It has meant getting up early every morning, going to work and to school. Each day I always learn something new and some things seem to be very interesting. I met a lot of people from other schools and lots of new friends. The teacher in this program have also taught me many things I will need next year. I am most thankful for learning what going into the real world of work feels like.

Yolanda Walker

6. Project Alert means a learning experience; and also love, care and happiness. It gives you a chance to meet people and to work for what you earn. Project Alert have taught me a lot this summer. I love this class and I love my work. I would like to thank everyone who has helped me this summer in my wonderful learning experience.

Stephanie R. Neal

7. Project Alert meant to me a lot. One thing is it helped me to meet new people. It also meant full work experience. One more and important thing, Project Alert meant to me and that is "staying out of trouble"!

Anthony Edmondson

7. To me Project Alert has meant a great deal. It has given me a new learning experience and an opportunity to meet new people. It has given me a chance to be independent and earn money. Project Alert has also prepared me very well for the BST test we will be taking this year. I was honored to take part in a special program like this, and would like to take part in another program like this next year.

Antonio Russell

8. Project Alert means more quarter hours and more money for me. It gives me a chance to meet many people and a chance to learn new things. Project Alert is more than just a program, it is an experience. Project Alert is a good program for young teens. It gives them a chance to make their own money and support their own needs.

Cynthia Bundy

9. Project Alert means a lot to me first of all:

P-Means People
R-Means Remember
O-Means Our
J-Means Justice
E-Means Evenly
C-Means Cooperative
T-Means Totally

A-Means Alert
L-Means Love
E-Means Everlasting
R-Means Religion
T-Means The End

All together it means people uniting together.

Wanda Loney

10. Project Alert was a success to me because I didn't know what I wanted to be in life, but now I have a few interests. Also, Project Alert has provided me with learning, money and even more love. The reason I say more love is because the teacher at the school I come from, are nothing like the teachers here. They didn't care if you learned or not. Something else, I don't have to ask Mom for five or ten dollars every week. I have money when I get that check until the next pay period comes around again. So like I said Project Alert has been a success to me in other ways besides money. Thanks, Project Alert.

Gloria Scott

11. Project Alert has been a learning process, from day one up until now. I have restored the things that I had forgotten. I have also learned different things in clerical work; such as filing, typing, running errands, using the computers and a lot of other things.

Marcus L. Simmons

12. Project Alert means a lot to me. For the past few weeks I have learned many things, and talked to new people. At the school the teachers have taught me things I never knew and some I still don't know about. The Library has shown me many things like working with computer's and dealing with new people. Now I really know what Project Alert means to me. Atlantans learning employment responsibilities together. I really enjoyed this program this summer.

Angelique Carter